

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 had been previously withdrawn to the filing of a divisional application.

Claim 17 has been canceled.

Claims 15, 16, and 18 have been amended.

Included herein is a supplemental Information Disclosure Statement filed in accordance with 37 C.F.R. 1.97 (c), disclosing commonly owned U.S. Patent No. 6,844,498 B2 and US Patent Publication No. 2004/0150532.

The Federal Research Statement at the beginning of the specification has been amended to correct the Department of Energy Contract Number. No new matter has been added.

The Office objected to the abstract of the disclosure because the content appeared to be greater than 150 words in length. The last sentence of the original abstract of the disclosure was deleted to correct this informality.

The Office objected to claim 16 because the term "ther" should have been recited as "the" and to claim 18, because the phrase of "the terminal end" should have been recited as "a terminal end." Claims 16 and 18 have been amended now to correct these informalities.

The Office rejected claims 15-16 and 19-28 under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Rhein-Knudsen et al 5,278,550 ('550 patent) in view of Eastlund et al 4,716,960 ('960 patent).

Claims 17 and 18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

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Claim 17 has been canceled, and claim 15 has been amended now to include the limitations of original claim 17. Since there were no intervening claims, Applicants believe that claim 15 as amended is now allowable.

Since claims 16, and 18-28 depend from allowable claim 15, Applicants believe that these claims are also allowable. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of claims 15, 16 and 18-28.

In view of the amendments made herein, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in condition for allowance and respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Please charge Deposit Account 180584 in the amount of \$180, the fee under 37 C.F.R. 1.17(p) for the filing of an Information Disclosure Statement after the mailing of a first office action but before the date of a final action. It is believed that there are no other fees due at this time. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required at any time during the prosecution of this application without specific authorization, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account 180584. If there are any questions concerning the above, please contact the undersigned at 281-878-5658.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffery E. Daly
Reg. No. 44,640

IntelliServ, Inc.
400 N. Sam Houston Prkwy East
Suite 900
Houston, TX 77060
Ph: 281-878-5658
Fax: 281-878-5720
e-mail: jeffery.daly@grantprideco.com

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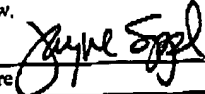
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